

# Central Fishing District



## Central District

**The Central Fishing District includes all waters in Montana east of the Continental Divide, (including the Belly and St Mary's River drainages) and west of the following described boundary:** Interstate 15 from the Montana-Canada border south to its junction with Hwy 2 at Shelby, then east on Hwy 2 to Chester, then south on Hwy 223 to State Route 80 at Fort Benton, then southeasterly along State Route 80 to its junction with State Route 81, then easterly on State Route 81 to its junction with U.S. Hwy 191, then northeasterly along U.S. Hwy 191 to its junction with State Route 19, then south on State Route 19 to its junction with U.S. Hwy 87 at Grassrange, then south on U.S. Hwy 87 to its junction with U.S. Hwy 12 at Roundup, then west on U.S. Hwy 12 to its junction with State Route 3 at Lavina, then south on State Route 3 to its junction with Interstate 90 at Billings, then easterly and southerly on Interstate 90 to the first crossing of the Little Bighorn River, then southerly along the west bank of the Little Bighorn River to the Montana-Wyoming border.

**Note:** Roadways that are used as boundaries between the Central and Eastern Fishing Districts are interpreted to be in the Central Fishing District.

For additional information regarding the boundaries in this fishing district, please call the following regional headquarters Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.:

Billings .....	406-247-2940
Bozeman .....	406-994-4042
Butte Area Office .....	406-494-1953
Great Falls.....	406-454-5840
Helena Area Office .....	406-495-3260
Lewistown Area Office.....	406-538-4658
TDD (Telephone device for the deaf) .....	406-444-1200

## CENTRAL DISTRICT STANDARD REGULATIONS

### Closed Waters

Waters operated as fish hatcheries and rearing ponds by FWP and the US Fish and Wildlife Service shall be closed to fishing at all times. Waters in which FWP operates fish traps and other structures are closed to fishing as posted. Certain water-supply lakes, streams and hazardous areas are also closed as posted.

### Dam Closures and Use Restrictions

In the interest of public health and safety, certain areas above and below most dams are closed to the public. These restrictions include areas where no public access is allowed below the ordinary high-water mark. The restricted areas are identified and delineated by signs and/or boat restraining systems.

The following dams are closed to all boating, sailing, floating, swimming, fishing or other recreational activity as marked by boat restraining systems or as posted to restrict access. Other dams not listed here may also be posted for restricted access. For more information call the FWP Fishing Access Coordinator at 406-444-7885, or contact the Bureau of Reclamation 406-247-7298, DNRC 406-444-2932 or PPL Montana 406-533-3415.

- Black Eagle Dam (Cascade County), Canyon Ferry Dam (Lewis & Clark County), Clark Canyon Dam (Beaverhead County), Cochrane Dam (Cascade County), Hauser Dam (Lewis & Clark County), Hebgen Dam (Gallatin County), Holter Dam (Lewis & Clark County), Madison Dam (Madison County), Morony Dam (Chouteau County), Rainbow Dam (Cascade County), Ruby Dam (Madison County), Ryan Dam (Cascade County), Tiber Dam (Liberty County), Yellowtail Dam (Big Horn County), Yellowtail Afterbay Dam (Big Horn County)

### Beaver Ponds

Beaver ponds on streams are governed by the same regulations that govern the streams.

### Irrigation Canals and Ditches

Man-made irrigation canals and ditches are open year round unless stated otherwise in exceptions to standard regulations. The same daily and possession limits apply to them as for rivers/streams.

### Reservoirs

Reservoirs are artificially impounded water behind a man-made dam extending upstream to the mouth of its inlet stream(s). Under normal operations, reservoir pool elevation, surface acreage, and the mouths of the inlet stream(s) are expected to vary throughout the year. The inlet stream(s) is often managed under seasons, limits and special regulations that differ from the reservoir regulations. Stream regulations apply to water upstream from the mouth on the reservoir. Streams are defined by a sloped streambed that results in a defined current flow between two discernible stream banks.

### Transporting Live Fish

An import permit is required to bring live fish of any kind into Montana. It is unlawful to possess or transport any live fish away from the body of water in which the fish were taken without authorization from FWP with the following exceptions:

- 1) transportation of fish for authorized commercial purposes (eg. Baitfish Seining Permit, Commercial Fish Ponds, Commercial Fishing, etc.);
- 2) use as live bait subject to restrictions imposed by the FWP Commission for the taking, transport and use of live baitfish (see "Bait Regulations" below); or
- 3) it is unlawful to possess or transport live fish, other than authorized baitfish, on roadways that form the boundary between the Eastern and Central fishing districts.

### Boat and Motor Restrictions

A complete, updated, copy of Montana Boating Laws can be obtained from any FWP office or FWP license agent. All passengers under the age of 12 must wear a PFD at all times when the boat is in motion if the boat is less than 26 feet long. A wearable, U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD must be available for each occupant of any boat.

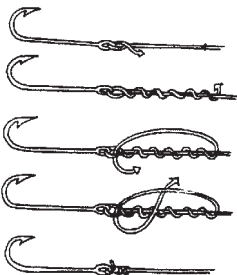
### Warm Water Game Fish Stamp

The 1999 Montana Legislature passed a bill to require the purchase of a warm water game fish stamp. The warm water game fish stamp is required to possess warm water fish on the following waters in the Central District:

Big Casino Creek Reservoir, Fergus County  
 Bighorn Lake, Carbon & Big Horn Counties  
 Bynum Reservoir, Teton County  
 Cooney Reservoir, Carbon County  
 Dailey Lake, Park County  
 Deadmans Basin Reservoir, Wheatland County  
 Kolar Reservoir #1, Judith Basin County  
 Kolar Reservoir #2, Judith Basin County  
 Kolar Reservoir #8, Judith Basin County

Lake Frances, Pondera County  
 Lake Josephine, Yellowstone County  
 Lower Carter Pond, Fergus County  
 Morony Dam Lake, Cascade County  
 Tunis Reservoir, Chouteau County  
 Wadsworth Reservoir, Cascade County  
 Warm Springs Creek, Fergus County

### Modified Clinch Knot



1. Put the end of the line through the eye of the hook and bring it back toward the line.
2. Make five "S" twists around the line.
3. Take the end back toward the hook and push it through the first loop nearest the eye.
4. Bring the end back through the big loop.
5. Hold the hook and the line, pull the knot tight until it looks like the knot shown.

## Methods of Taking Fish

- A valid fishing license is required for all types of fishing.
- Spears and bows are considered lines for purposes of determining line limits.
- When multiple lines are allowed on a body of water, the maximum number of lines allowed shall not exceed the greater of either the attended lines or the setlines. For example, if an angler wants to spear for northern pike on Lake Frances in the winter (where the limit is 2 attended lines all year or 6 setlines through the ice), he/she may have a maximum of only 5 setlines in use if he/she is using one spear, for a total of 6 lines.

### Hook and Line Limits

#### Open Water

##### Rivers and Streams

- 1 line with 2 hooks per line, with or without a pole. The pole or line must be attended and in the angler's immediate control.

##### Lakes and Reservoirs

- 2 lines with 2 hooks per line. All lines must be attended and in the angler's immediate control.

#### Ice Fishing

##### Lakes and Reservoirs

- 2 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice on lakes, reservoirs, or ponds open to fishing. When a line is used through the ice, the angler need not be in immediate control, but must be in the vicinity and in visual contact with the line.

##### Size of Hole

- In waters not open to spearing, the maximum size hole that may be used for ice fishing is 144 square inches or 12 inches in diameter.
- There is no size limit for a hole used for fishing with a spear.

##### Shelters

- Shelter definition/use: Any hut or enclosure constructed of any material, except ice or snow, for the purpose of ice fishing.
- It is illegal to use any ice fishing shelter not conforming to the following rules.
  - Shelter identification: Identification must be painted on or otherwise affixed to all unattended shelters in legible, 2-inch letters plainly visible at a distance of 100 feet or 9/10-digit ALS number. Attended shelters at Clark Canyon Reservoir, Deadman's Basin, Hauser Reservoir, Lake Francis and Lake Helena must also be identified.
  - Inspection: Each closed shelter shall have a door that an officer may readily open from the outside for inspection when it is occupied.
  - Waste and rubbish disposal: Owners and occupants of shelters are required to keep their shelters (and the area immediately around them) free from rubbish. Anglers must remove waste materials before they leave for the day.
  - Shelter removal: Daily removal of shelters is required on:
    - Fitzpatrick Lake
    - Deadmans Basin
    - Helena Valley Regulating Reservoir
  - Shelters may not be placed on the ice prior to sunrise and must be removed prior to sunset each day on Hauser Reservoir and Lake Helena.
  - Shelter removal after the season: The owner of an ice fishing shelter shall remove it from the ice before it becomes irretrievable at the end of the season, or within five days from receipt of notification from FWP to remove the shelter.

### Setlines

- Setlines may be used only on waters specified in District Exceptions.
- Setlines must be checked by the fisherman at least once every 24 hours.
- The fisherman's name and phone number or 9/10-digit ALS# must be attached to each setline.
- Setlines shall not be attached to jugs or other floating devices.

### Bow and Arrow

- Waters open to angling are open to taking nongame fish with bow and arrow. Crossbows are illegal.

### Nets and Traps

- Landing nets may be used for landing hooked fish. See Bait Regulations for use of nets to harvest bait fish.

### Snagging

- Snagging of fish is allowed only on waters specified in District Exceptions.

### Spearing

- In all waters open to fishing, nongame fish may be taken with rubber or spring-propelled spears by persons swimming or submerged. Rubber or spring-propelled spears may be used only by persons swimming or submerged in the water and may be used only for designated species in designated waters.

## Bait Regulations

- Game fish, including yellow perch, may not be used as bait (live or dead) except as authorized below under Dead Bait.
- Possession of live nongame fish is prohibited on waters closed to using live fish as bait.
- It is illegal to release live bait of any kind into Montana waters; do not empty any live bait containers at your fishing site.
- Where live fish may be used as bait (see list below under Live Bait), legal nongame fish may be taken for use as bait in the following manner:
  - with hook and line; or
  - with seines no larger than 12 feet by 4 feet; or
  - with minnow traps (the dimensions shall not exceed 24 inches x 12 inches x 12 inches); or
  - with cast nets (maximum 6-foot radius) and dip nets (no larger than 3 feet x 3 feet).
- Legal nongame fish, except sculpins (genus *Cottus*) which must be killed prior to transport, may only be transported live to or from:
  - waters where live nongame fish may be used as bait in the Central Fishing District, or
  - anywhere within the boundaries of the Eastern Fishing District.
- On waters within the Central Fishing District that do not allow the use of live bait and are not restricted to artificial flies and lures, sculpins (genus *Cottus*) may be collected and used as dead bait. Collection screens or nets may not exceed four (4) feet in length on any side. Sculpins must be killed immediately upon collection and may not be used as live bait. *[Note: Sculpins (genus Cottus) may not be used for bait in the Western Fishing District.]*
- See Commercial Fishing License requirements for information on commercial harvest permits.

### Live Bait

- Live bait fish may not be imported into Montana, except by permit for use in Bighorn Lake and Afterbay Reservoir. Bait fish collected in the Bighorn River drainage of Wyoming may be imported under a permit issued by FWP. For a permit, contact the FWP Fisheries Division at 2300 Lake Elmo Drive, Billings MT 59105 or call (406)247-2940.
- Live animals such as meal worms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians and insects may be used as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial flies and lures. Leeches may only be imported into Montana from FWP-approved leech dealers and may be acquired from approved bait dealers in Montana. Anglers who import leeches must have in their possession a bill-of-sale from the approved out-of-state leech dealer when fishing with leeches in Montana. A list of approved out-of-state leech dealers may be obtained from FWP by calling 406-452-6181.
- Nongame fish that may be used as live bait in the Central Fishing District include all nongame species except black bullheads, bluegill, carp, goldfish, green sunfish, pumpkinseed, rainbow smelt, sculpins, stonecats and yellow bullheads.
- Live nongame fish may be used as bait only in the following waters:
  - Bighorn Lake and Afterbay Reservoir
  - Bighorn River—Afterbay Dam to the cable 600 feet downstream, and downstream from the Bighorn FAS
  - Clarks Fork Yellowstone River—downstream from the bridge at Bridger
  - Marias River and tributaries downstream from I-15
  - Missouri River downstream from Morony Dam
  - Muddy Creek Drainage near Vaughn, including all streams and drainage canals
  - Teton River and tributaries downstream from I-15
  - Tiber Reservoir (Lake Elwell), Toole and Liberty counties
  - Yellowstone River and all streams and ditches in the drainage downstream from the mouth of the Clarks Fork (except the section of the Bighorn River between the cable 600 feet downstream from Afterbay Dam and the Bighorn FAS).

### Dead Bait

- Nongame fish that are freshly killed or have been preserved by freezing, salting or pickling may be used as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial flies and lures. Heads and entrails of non-game fish may also be used as bait.
- Whole game fish may not be used as bait.
- Parts/pieces of bass, burbot (ling), channel catfish, crappie, northern pike, paddlefish, sauger, shovelnose sturgeon, tiger muskellunge, walleye, or yellow perch may be used as bait if edible portions are not wasted.
- The eggs of char, cisco, grayling, salmon or trout may be used as bait. Parts/pieces of salmonids may not be used as bait.

## Daily and Possession Limits

**Possession limit** means the number of fish that you may possess at any time in any form: fresh, stored in freezers or lockers, salted, smoked, dried, canned or otherwise preserved. It is illegal to preserve fish (salted, smoked, dried, canned, or otherwise preserved) before taking them to your permanent residence (the physical abode or structure you maintain as your principal, legal residence) unless those fish can be counted. Mobile recreational vehicles, travel trailers, tents or storage/freezer lockers do not qualify as permanent residences. No person may sell or take for the purpose of sale any fish except as authorized in commercial fishing regulations.

**Daily limit** means the number of fish you may legally take during a calendar day. It is unlawful to exceed the standard daily limit unless the regulations for the water body where you are fishing specify a different limit. "Legally taken" means fish caught and not immediately released alive. Where catch and release is allowed, fish released alive are considered not taken. A fish when landed and not immediately released becomes part of the daily limit of the person originally hooking the fish, even if the fish is donated to another person. If you receive fish from another angler, those fish also become part of your daily limit. You may possess the daily limit allowed only for the body of water on which you are fishing.

### Handling and Transporting Legally Taken Fish

While a person is fishing, or while on the water, or on the ice:

- All fish in possession must be visibly identifiable to species.
- For a species of fish where size limits apply, all fish in possession must be whole with head, skin, fins and tail attached. Gills and entrails may be removed.
- Fish may be dressed and filleted for immediate consumption.
- Fish may be dressed and filleted for transport to your permanent residence, unless size limits apply, under the following conditions:
  - All fish can be counted and identified. Two fillets will be counted as one fish. If the catch is frozen prior to transport, each fish or fillet must be packaged so it can be counted.
  - Salmonids (trout, salmon, grayling, char and whitefish): the entire skin must be attached to the fillet for identification.
  - Non-salmonids: a minimum of one inch by one inch square shoulder patch of skin with scales must remain attached to each fillet for identification.
    - In areas where it is necessary to distinguish between sauger and walleye, fish must be kept whole for identification while on the water (see District Exceptions). Gills and entrails may be removed. Sauger and walleye may be filleted (unless size limits apply) only when you are off the water and done fishing for the day.